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### Article

**Citation** (please note it is advisable to refer to the publisher's version if you intend to cite from this work)

**Palasinski, M and Seol, KO (2015) Examination of religious identity meta-stereotypes when defying its relevant source through outgroup helping. *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*, 7 (1). pp. 80-89. ISSN 1941-1022**

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Running head: IDENTITY AND THREAT DIRECTNESS IN HELPING

**Examination of religious identity meta-stereotypes when defying its relevant source  
through outgroup helping.**

### Abstract

The present paper addresses a deficit in research on indirect and direct sources of threat to meta-stereotypes in strategic outgroup helping. In *Study 1* ( $N = 70$ ), where the source of threat to participants' own religious identities was directly relevant, offers of help were made only if the available forms of help were pertinent to negating the negative religious stereotypes or if such offers could put the stereotypes in favorable light. This pattern also held in *Study 2* ( $N = 97$ ), where the source of threat to participants' religious identities was peripheral and therefore indirect. Taken together, it appears that it is not so much the directness of sources of threat to meta-stereotypes as the possibility of meaningfully rebutting the negative stereotype or presenting it in favorable terms that matters in strategic outgroup helping.

*Keywords:* helping, religious identity, threat directness, stereotype threat

We may help other groups in order to disconfirm a stereotype of our own group such as national identity (or religious identity (Hopkins et al., 2007), which is known as meta-stereotyping. Meta-stereotypes can be defined as beliefs that A group members have about the stereotypes that B group members typically have about the A group members (Vorauer, Main & O'Connell, 1998). For example, a study showed that when Scots experienced a direct stereotype threat (i.e., when the threat source was immediately relevant to their identity<sup>1</sup>) and thought they were seen as mean by the English, they were motivated to refute the negative stereotype and believed out-group helping was an effective way of refuting the stereotype (Hopkins et al., 2007). In that study, increasing the salience of the stereotype of the Scots as mean resulted in an increase in the help volunteered to out-group members (i.e., the English).

Although meta-stereotypes could affect behavior (e.g., Oldenhuis, Gordijn & Otten, 2007; Sigelman & Tuch, 1997; Vorauer, Hunter, Main & Roy, 2000; Winslow, 2004), there is emerging interest in when meta-stereotypes become activated. Recent studies revealed that meta-stereotypes were activated when there was potential for evaluating outgroup members (Vorauer et al., 2000), when the powerless tried to see how others see them (Anderson, 2011; Lammers, Gordijn & Otten, 2008), and when empathy was instantiated during an intergroup exchange (Vorauer & Sasaki, 2009). Meta-stereotypes also occurred in the presence of high public self-consciousness and when great importance was accorded to one's racial attitudes (Vorauer et al., 2000). Holding prejudiced attitudes (Kamans, Gordijn, Oldenhuis & Otten, 2009) and having external locus of control (Gordijn & Boven, 2009) have also been identified as causal factors.

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<sup>1</sup> An indirect stereotype threat would come from a source that would be only peripherally relevant

When such factors are difficult to define, it is situational cues that make it relevant to determine how one is seen by the outgroup (Vorauer et al., 2000), opening a debate about the role of the extent to which the source of meta-stereotypes is relevant. Building on the stereotype threat literature, which is about poorer performance when negative stereotypes were activated and when the performance domain was self-relevant for the individual (Jamieson & Harkins, 2012; Steele, 1997), in this paper we probed the possibility that the relevance of meta-stereotype source might play a moderating role in outgroup helping. Thus we aimed to disambiguate some of the inconsistency that stereotype threats have been associated with (Steele, Spencer & Aronson, 2002). Given the inherent ethos of helping others in need, which can be found in most religions, as well as the lack of studies on religious identity meta-stereotyping, the focus in this work was put on religious rather than national identity meta-stereotypes.

In the literature on religion and helping (Batson, Floyd, Meyer & Winner, 1999; Hansen, Vanderberg & Patterson, 1995; Rengerus, Smith & Sikkink, 1998; Smith & Sikkink, 2003), religiosity often was considered as an individual difference variable. This, however, has recently begun to change in terms of greater focus on religious identity as a social or collective identity (Graham & Haidt, 2010; Hopkins & Johnston, 2009; Van Rijswijk; Ysseldyk, Matheson & Anisman, 2010). In this paper, then, we explored religion as a social identity and we focused on its contents, i.e., the norms that they impart. It appears that identity contents in general are important in shaping helping behavior and that it is not necessarily the individual's needs, but the group's needs that motivate people to help others (Reicher, Cassidy, Hopkins & Levine, 2006; Van Leeuwen & Täuber, 2010; Vos & van der Zee, 2011).

Drawing on such research on helping and on the argument that it is worthwhile to identify conditions under which negative stereotypes might have positive effects (Seibt & Förster, 2004), as well as on our assumptions, which we tested later, we made three predictions. We anticipated that outgroup helping could be motivated by the refutation of religious meta-stereotypes in a similar way to the refutation of national meta-stereotypes used by Hopkins et al. (2007) (*Hypothesis 1*). We also anticipated that outgroup helping would occur under the condition of a minimal threat (i.e., where its source was relevant indirectly - *Hypothesis 2*), but only if the available forms of help were pertinent to questioning the negative religious stereotypes (*Hypothesis 3*). *Hypotheses 2 and 3* were based on the theoretical possibility that even peripheral situational cues, like indirectness of a given threat source, might influence how one thinks his group is seen by the outgroup (Vorauer et al., 2000).

Aiming to examine meta-stereotype threat using religious identity, we ran our studies in a place where religion is still important and relevant to the majority of its population. While the influence of organized religion seems to be declining in Western Europe, it still has a dominant position in fast westernizing countries in Eastern and Central Europe such as Poland, whose estimated 38 million population comprises over 53% of regularly practicing Catholics (Day, 2009; Hetnal, 1999; Zdankiewicz, 2001). Whilst one's religious experience, including religious identity, is culture-specific (French et al., 2008; Eisenberg et al., 2009), the mechanism of evoking helping through meta-stereotyping is apparently not (Hopkins et al., 2007; Kamans, 2009).

Exploring identity threat and Polish religious identity, which Van Rijswijk, Hopkins and Johnston (2009) found influential in social categorization, we included the two most dominant versions of that religious identity – Christian and Catholic. As

‘Catholicism’ is nested within the superordinate and larger ‘Christianity’ that seems to be naturally more inclusive, there is some overlap between them and the Catholic identity contents are clearly, yet subtly, different from the Christian identity contents in Poland. Love-thy-neighbor Christianity typically encourages helping others regardless of their background or group membership (Jackson, 2003; Martin, 2008). In contrast, the contents of Catholic identity, inferred by the Catholic tradition and Vatican policy, contain less explicit onus to help members of other religious groups (Firlit, 1998) and put more emphasis on the strict observance of formal rituals (Hetnal, 1999).

Accordingly, the Poles who identify themselves as Catholic were found to describe the Poles who identify themselves as Christian as a broad group that may include Evangelicals and non-church goers. The Poles who identify themselves as Christian, on the other hand, were found to describe the Poles who identify themselves as Catholic as a narrow group that excludes other denominations and non-church goers (Zdankiewicz, 2001).

### **Overview of Studies**

To verify the subtle and critical distinctions between Catholic and Christian identities, we first carried out a three part *Pilot Study*. The first two parts were aimed at respectively examining the openness and formality contents of Catholic and Christian identities. The third part was aimed at examining the negative valence of Catholic meta-stereotypes that hark back to such respective contents: intolerance and idolatry. Trying to test *Hypotheses 1* and *3*, we ran *Study 1* which examined if negative religious stereotypes, whose source was directly relevant to participants’ identities, might be disconfirmed by outgroup helping (to implied Muslims). Aiming to test *Hypothesis 2*, we ran *Study 2*, which was modelled after *Study 1*, so as to probe this question under a

condition where the source of threat to participants' religious identities was less relevant and thus indirect.

### **Pilot Study**

We conducted a three-part *Pilot Study* to examine the openness and formality contents of Catholic and Christian identities, and the negative valence of Catholic meta-stereotypes that hark back to such respective contents: intolerance and idolatry.

Following institutional ethics approval, in different lecture theatres of Silesian University of Technology (Poland), an experimenter introduced himself as interested in religious identities and asked students for participation. In the first part, the experimenter advised forty male participants that he was interested in how Catholics (Condition A) and Christians (Condition B) were seen in terms of their openness towards the outgroup in general. He then administered a short questionnaire (appendix A) on differences between Catholic and Christian inclusivity.

In the second part, the experimenter advised a separate group of forty male participants that he was interested in how Catholics (Condition C) and Christians (Condition D) were seen in terms of their religious formality. He then administered a different short questionnaire (appendix B) on differences between Catholic and Christian rituality. Allowing for the possibility that the meta-stereotypes of intolerance and idolatry might be perceived as different in their negative valence (particularly in the Catholic context), we subsequently ran the third part of the *Pilot Study*. Rather than classically examining such valence in terms of anxiety, we wanted to see if embarrassment might also effectively capture a sense of identity threat. The experimenter informed a new group of seventy male participants that by agreeing to participate they would confirm their Catholic status. The experimenter then gave them



two kinds of questionnaires (appendices D and E), asking them to answer a few questions about how embarrassing they found the Catholic stereotypes of intolerance (Condition E) and idolatry (Condition F).

### **Results of Pilot Study**

Running an ANOVA for the part 1, we found that the social category of Catholics ( $M = 2.58$ ,  $SD = .84$ ) was less inclusive than the category of Christianity ( $M = 3.62$ ,  $SD = 1.52$ ),  $F(1, 39) = 7.19$ ,  $p = .01$ ). The ANOVA for the second part of the study found that Catholics ( $M = 4.71$ ,  $SD = 1.87$ ) were associated with a greater degree of religious formality than Christians ( $M = 3.55$ ,  $SD = 1.40$ ) ( $F(1, 39) = 6.20$ ,  $p = .01$ ). The ANOVA for the third part found that the difference between the Catholic stereotype of intolerance ( $M = 5.60$ ,  $SD = 2.10$ ) and the Catholic stereotype of idolatry ( $M = 5.12$ ,  $SD = 2.31$ ) was not statistically significant ( $F(1, 69) = .80$ ,  $p = .38$ ).

### **Study 1**

In *Study 1*, we tested whether outgroup helping could be motivated by the refutation of religious meta-stereotypes in a similar way to the refutation of national meta-stereotypes used by Hopkins et al. (2007) (*Hypothesis 1*). We also explored if this would be the case only if the available forms of help were pertinent to questioning the negative religious stereotypes (*Hypothesis 3*). We expected that keeping the distinctions between Catholicism and Christianity would be germane to the exploration of how the related negative meta-stereotypes of iconolatry and intolerance could be actively refuted by helping a specific outgroup of implied Muslim victims. The meta-stereotypes were derived from theological foundations and presented as allegedly held by Muslims in general. They were also historically relevant to the Vatican tradition and more likely to be ascribed to Catholics than to Christians in general. To ensure the

outgroup manipulation, we described the outgroup victims (the helpees) as being religiously, ethnically and geographically different (desperate local population gathering at the local mosque in a multi-religious African country in Malawi). Although both meta-stereotypes seemed to be negative and threatening to the ingroup image, they were identity-threatening at different levels – intergroup behavior (‘intolerance’ which refers to discrimination against outgroup members) and intragroup behavior (‘idolatry’ which refers to the ingroup’s practice of iconolatry).

It is worth noting here the historical context of Christian crusades against Muslims and past clashes between Poles and Muslim Turks. In light of Christian theories of peace, love and compassion, which are epitomized by Christ’s commandment: ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself,’ we anticipated that the presence of the ‘intolerant’ stereotype, which participants were informed Muslims hold of them, would evoke some elements of such embarrassing and identity-threatening images of the past. The Vatican’s policy of championing Christ as the only true door to salvation, which is also largely endorsed by most of Poland’s schools, lent further support to the credibility of this stereotype.

We justified the use of the ‘idolatrous’ prime by the long Catholic tradition of relying on iconolatry, which is in sharp contrast to Islam. We argue that the presence of the ‘idolatrous’ stereotype, which Muslims have grounds to hold of Catholics in particular, might highlight the paradox of praying both to the monotheistic God and holy pictures featuring saints. In light of the commandments: ‘Thou shalt have no other gods before me,’ and ‘Thou shalt not make any graven image,’ this can be seen as embarrassing and religious identity-threatening. Taking all that into account, we expected participants to identify more with Catholicism than with Christianity and

anticipated that Catholicism-primed participants, to whom the stereotypes of intolerance and iconolatry were likely to be more relevant than to Christianity-primed participants, would offer most help.

## Method

**Participants.** A total of seventy male students participated in this study. Their ages ranged from 19 to 22 ( $M = 20.40$ ,  $SD = 2.82$ ).

**Design.** The study was a 2 (Identity: Catholic/Christian) x 2 (Meta-Stereotype: Intolerant/Idolatrous) between subjects design.

**Procedure.** The procedure took place in various lecture theatres of Silesian University of Technology just before lectures began and it had three consecutive parts that were respectively aimed at examining: ingroup identification, stereotype contents and helping responses.

In the first part, the experimenter began by introducing himself as a cultural studies university student and giving a cover story. He advised participants that he was doing research on memory for stereotypes. He asked them for voluntary participation only if they identified as Catholic (or Christian in the 2nd condition), each time emphasizing that by taking part in his research they would confirm their Catholic (or Christian in the 2nd condition) status. He also advised that if some of them did not feel Catholic (or Christian in the 2nd condition – 1<sup>st</sup> independent variable: Primed Religious Identity) they could still take part in his research, but asked them to write at the top that they did not feel so (this was only a small minority of participants who were thus not included in the analysis). He then provided participants with *the ingroup identification scale* (see appendix C- ten-item measure:  $\alpha = .90$  - adapted from Brown, Condor,

Matthews, Wade & Williams's 1986 study) and asked them to indicate the extent to which they identified as Catholic (or Christian in the 2nd condition).

In the second part, the experimenter asked participants to indicate the extent to which being intolerant and idolatrous was characteristic of Catholics (or Christians in the 2nd condition – 2<sup>nd</sup> independent variable: Primed Stereotype) in general (a point scale anchored 1 = *not at all*; 9 = *very much*). Following that, he asked them to take part in a study in which they would read and memorize a stereotypical view of Catholics (or Christians in the 2nd condition - see Materials) that was allegedly held by Muslims. After they finished reading the stereotypical views, he asked them about the extent to which Muslims might sometimes think of Catholics (or Christians in the 2nd condition) in terms of such stereotypes (a point scale anchored 1 = *not at all*; 9 = *very much*). He explained to participants that the usual procedure at that point would be to administer a distracter task so as to interfere with their memory processes. Then he advised participants that in order to make better use of time, his accompanying confederate (a student from a different university), who was standing next to him all the time, was going to ask them for help with data collection for an unrelated project.

In the third part, which was the same in the 1st and 2nd conditions, the confederate introduced himself as a student from a department of cultural and religious studies and asked participants to take part in pilot research for his thesis. He advised participants that they might find the study disturbing and informed them that if they felt any discomfort they could discontinue their participation at any time. He then provided them with a short report on a natural disaster and its victims seeking shelter at the local mosque (see Materials). At the bottom of the disaster report, participants were asked to indicate the help they would be ready to give to the mosque victims (3 dependent

variables): the amount of money to be donated for food and clothes (in zloty: 0 - 100), the amount of time to be offered for food and clothes packaging (in minutes: 0 - 240) and their willingness to write to the local bishop asking for organized help on a 9-point scale (1 = *very unlikely*; 9 = *very likely*). At the very end, they were also asked to write one or two sentences about what they thought about 'it' all. Having completed the questionnaire, they were thanked, debriefed and given instructions about how they could learn more about the study. No students withdrew from their participation.

**Materials.** In the 'intolerant' meta-stereotype condition, which Catholicism and Christianity-primed participants were separately subjected to, the text was as follows:

In the Muslim world the negative terms frequently associated with Catholics/Christian are 'intolerant,' 'prejudiced against other faiths' and 'unhelpful to non-Catholics/Christians.' This was also confirmed in our interviews. As one Muslim respondent put it, 'Maybe the reason for this is their education encouraging them to think of their faith as the most superior, but regardless of the reason they are intolerant, yet they still appear to be religious.' Another said, 'One can easily mistake their prejudice against other religions for some kind of devotion that is manifest when they emphasize that theirs is the only true one, but at the end of the day, their attitude is prejudiced.' Yet, another Muslim respondent compared the Catholic/Christian condescension towards other religions to 'an elaborate version of intolerance.'

In the 'idolatrous' meta-stereotype condition, which Catholicism and Christianity-primed participants were separately subjected to, the text was as follows:

In the Muslim world the negative terms frequently associated with Catholics/Christian are 'idolatrous,' 'fetish-minded' and 'picture-worshipping.'

This was also confirmed in our interviews. As one Muslim respondent put it, ‘Maybe the reason for this is their education encouraging them to revere pictures and objects, but regardless of the reason, they are idolatrous, yet they still appear to be religious.’ Another one said, ‘One can easily mistake their idolatry for some kind of devotion that is manifest when they practice their rituals, but at the end of the day their attitude is idol-worshipping.’ Yet another Muslim respondent compared the Catholic/Christian idolatry to ‘an elaborate version of fetishization.’

The natural disaster report read as follows:

The people of the African country of Malawi have been recently struck with an unprecedented force by severe drought repercussions. The maize crop failure brought about by a drastic drop in rainfall began to take its toll. The area where starvation is rampant is growing faster than previously thought. This unusually devastating natural disaster has led to the death of thousands and the displacement of many more. The desperate local population is *gathering at the local mosque*. They need food, medical supplies, blankets and other basic necessities.

### Results of Study 1

Participants confirmed that they believed Muslims saw Catholics as intolerant ( $M = 7.00$ ,  $SD = 1.18$ ) more than they did themselves ( $M = 6.11$ ,  $SD = 1.40$ ),  $t(17) = -2.04$ ,  $p = .05$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .11$ . Participants confirmed that they believed Muslims saw Christians as intolerant ( $M = 7.60$ ,  $SD = 1.45$ ) more than they did themselves ( $M = 6.80$ ,  $SD = 1.47$ ),  $t(14) = -3.59$ ,  $p = .003$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .15$ . They also indicated that they thought Muslims saw Catholics as idolatrous ( $M = 7.52$ ,  $SD = 1.23$ ) more than they did

themselves ( $M = 6.41$ ,  $SD = 1.12$ ),  $t(16) = -4.14$ ,  $p = .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .19$ . Participants showed that they believed Muslims saw Christians as idolatrous ( $M = 6.00$ ,  $SD = 1.26$ ) more than they did themselves ( $M = 5.61$ ,  $SD = 1.43$ ), but this difference was not statistically significant,  $t(20) = -1.56$ ,  $p = .34$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .02$ .

When these results were analyzed in a 2 (Stereotype Contents: intolerant and idolatrous) x 2 (Stereotype Source - perceptions of what Catholics think Catholics/Muslims would think of them- self/auto and Muslims/meta) between-subjects design, the interaction was not significant  $F(1, 70) = .14$ ,  $p = .70$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .002$ , illustrating that the magnitude of the discrepancy between Catholic auto- and meta-stereotypes was not statistically greater for the idolatrous dimension than for the intolerant dimension. The simple main effect for Stereotype Contents was not significant either,  $F(1, 70) = 1.94$ ,  $p = .17$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .029$ , but the simple main effect for Stereotype Source was,  $F(1, 70) = 11.37$ ,  $p = .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .147$ , showing that in general holding such stereotypes by the Muslim audience ( $M = 7.26$ ,  $SD = .21$ ) was considered to be more likely than holding them by themselves ( $M = 6.26$ ,  $SD = .21$ ).

Running a similar ANOVA (Christian Stereotype), we found that the interaction was not statistically significant,  $F(1, 70) = .57$ ,  $p = .45$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .009$ , illustrating that the magnitude of the discrepancy between Christian auto- and meta-stereotypes was not statistically greater for the intolerant dimension than the idolatrous dimension. However, the simple main effects for Stereotype Source and Stereotype Contents were statistically significant, respectively,  $F(1, 70) = 3.84$ ,  $p = .05$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .055$  and  $F(1, 70) = 26.26$ ,  $p = .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .285$ . This shows that in general holding such stereotypes by the Muslim audience ( $M = 6.92$ ,  $SD = .22$ ) was considered to be more likely than holding them by themselves ( $M = 6.31$ ,  $SD = .22$ ) and that in general participants believed more

in the Christian stereotype of intolerance ( $M = 7.43$ ,  $SD = .24$ ) than idolatry ( $M = 5.81$ ,  $SD = .20$ ).

The means of ingroup identification scales suggested participants' greater attachment to Catholicism ( $M = 5.26$ ,  $SD = 1.63$ ) rather than to Christianity ( $M = 4.22$ ,  $SD = 1.71$ ). A one way ANOVA found that this difference was statistically significant,  $F(1, 69) = 6.72$ ,  $p = .01$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .09$ . Consequently, in the subsequent analysis the strength of identification was always measured as a covariate. This was to ensure that any main or interaction effects could not just be explained in terms of differences in strength of identification. As for monetary and time donation, as well as the organized religious support, no main effects for Strength of Identification were found at any significant level, respectively,  $F(1, 70) = 1.02$ ,  $p = .31$ ;  $F(1, 70) = .02$ ,  $p = .89$ ; and  $F(1, 70) = .04$ ,  $p = .84$ .

**Monetary donation.** A strong main effect was found for Meta-Stereotype,  $F(1, 70) = 5.69$ ,  $p = .02$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .081$ . In other words, when participants were presented with intolerance, they were more likely to give money to the mosque victims ( $M = 33.51$ ,  $SD = 4.10$ ) than when they were primed with idolatry ( $M = 20.23$ ,  $SD = 3.75$ ). No main effect was found for Identity,  $F(1, 70) = .001$ ,  $p = .94$  and the interaction of the two variables was not significant either,  $F(1, 70) = 1.01$ ,  $p = .31$ .

**Time donation.** A strong main effect was found for Meta-Stereotype,  $F(1, 70) = 6.88$ ,  $p = .01$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .088$ . In other words, when participants were presented with intolerance, they were more likely to offer time to the mosque victims ( $M = 106.18$ ,  $SD = 10.64$ ) than when they were primed with idolatry ( $M = 70.03$ ,  $SD = 9.74$ ). No significant main effect was found for Identity,  $F(1, 70) = .15$ ,  $p = .69$  and the interaction of the two variables was not significant either:  $F(1, 70) = .28$ ,  $p = .59$ .



**Organized religious support.** No main effects were found for Meta-Stereotype,  $F(1, 70) = .34, p = .56$  or Identity,  $F(1, 70) = .84, p = .36$ . The interaction of the two variables, however, was significant,  $F(1, 70) = 5.43, p = .02, \eta_p^2 = .08$ . A post hoc inspection of the means suggested that under the idolatry salience condition participants were more likely to write a letter to the local bishop when they were primed with Catholicism ( $M = 2.23, SD = .23$ ) rather than with Christianity ( $M = 1.47, SD = .13$ ),  $F(1, 37) = 8.74, p = .005$ .

## Discussion

The results of *Study 1* are consistent with *Hypotheses 1* and *3*. Overall, Catholicism-primed participants were not more helpful than Christianity-primed participants. Instead, both groups offered the mosque outgroup more help when they were told that those who might represent that outgroup saw them as intolerant rather than idolatrous. The forms of such help, however, were limited to the dimensions that were most relevant to defying the image of bigotry - money and time. It appears that under the intolerance condition, the organized religious support probably distanced participants from elements of the Catholic tradition and history that in some ways have more to do with claiming moral superiority than with tolerance (Hetnal, 1999).

However, it appears that under the idolatry condition contacting the local bishop, who might be associated with rallying coordinated help, could give Catholicism-primed participants an opportunity to highlight a positive aspect of an elaborate and large institution that formally underpins their Catholic identity. Under this condition, the offers of money and time to the outgroup victims were smallest and making Catholic as opposed to Christian identity salient did not lead to greater outgroup helping. It appears, then, that the charge of intolerance could be interpreted as being germane to

both Catholicism and Christianity-primed participants. Would this still be case if the audience allegedly holding such stereotypes is less relevant and if help-recipients' religious identity is more ambiguous? This question was pursued in *Study 2*.

### **Study 2**

Having found that helping under the condition of a direct identity threat could be motivated by the refutation of negative religious meta-stereotypes if the available forms of help were pertinent to questioning the negative religious stereotypes, we tested *Hypothesis 2*. In other words, we wanted to examine if such a pattern of results would hold even when the audience holding such stereotypes was not directly relevant and when help-recipients' identity was unclear.

Although in *Study 1* it was unclear what unthreatened groups could do, in *Study 2* we wanted to test *Hypotheses 1* and *3* again, and with female participants, but this time we minimized the threat directness. In the following experimental conditions, which were presented similarly to *Study 1*, we kept the Catholic and Christian meta-stereotypes of intolerance, but we replaced the meta-stereotype of idolatry by a meta-stereotype of backwardness which might be interpreted as being at both intergroup and intragroup levels.

Considering that disconfirming the meta-stereotype of idolatry by helping the outgroup might not be as clear as disconfirming the meta-stereotype of intolerance, we first examined a new meta-stereotype that is related to, and yet different from intolerance – backwardness. In different lecture theatres of Silesian University of Technology, the experimenter introduced himself as interested in stereotypes. To compare the negative valance of intolerance and backwardness, he asked a group of 90 female students to participate in a short study. The experimenter informed participants

that by agreeing to participate they would confirm their Catholic (the 1<sup>st</sup> Condition) or Christian (the 2<sup>nd</sup> Condition) status. He then gave them a questionnaire (appendices D and F) and asked them to answer a few questions about how embarrassing they find the given stereotype.

Next, we introduced new conditions and made them theoretically related to *Study 1*. Thus, we deliberately chose a group that had little to do with the African victims, ‘the faiths of the book’ and Polish identity. In the search for a reference point that might put the Catholic and Christian meta-stereotypes in perspective, we introduced atheist meta-stereotypes. We did not choose the category of students as we were concerned that our participants would find the meta-stereotypes implausible and might potentially associate this category with their own background.

Suspecting that outgroup helping might be more complex and less clear under indirect threat conditions and when help-recipients’ identity is unspecified, which presents a main gap in the literature on outgroup helping, we made two further changes. We changed the source of negative meta-stereotypes from Muslims to the English and presented African victims as seeking shelter at the local temple (swiatynia is religiously ambiguous in Polish) rather than the local mosque. Drawing on the conclusions from *Study 1*, we predicted that participants would offer most help when the available channel of helping was most relevant to rebutting the negative religious meta-stereotype. We suspected that this would be the case even if participants were primed with Catholicism and Christianity less explicitly, leaving these two primes embedded mainly in the given descriptions of Catholics and Christians. Given the similarity between the meta-stereotypes in *Study 2*, we did not anticipate differences between them. However, in light of the very conservative Vatican agenda, which might be seen

as outdated by more liberal Christians, we expected the meta-stereotypes to be more relevant to the Catholic identity. On this basis, we anticipated that even under a minimal identity threat, participants exposed to the Catholic meta-stereotypes would be more likely to refute them than participants exposed to Christian and atheist meta-stereotypes.

## Method

**Participants.** A total of 97 female students participated in this study. Their ages ranged from 20 to 24 ( $M = 22.31$ ,  $SD = 2.52$ ).

**Design.** The study was a 3 (Meta-Stereotyped Group Identity: Catholic/Christian/atheist) x 2 (Meta-Stereotype: Intolerant/Backward) between subjects design.

**Procedure.** We retained a similar procedure from *Study 1*, but to examine the stereotype threat from a different angle we introduced two alterations. First, given the earlier absence of the main effects for Identity, we made the Catholic and Christian identities less explicit, although we again asked for participation only those students who identified as Catholic (the 1<sup>st</sup> Condition) and Christian (2<sup>nd</sup> condition). Secondly, to minimize the potentially competitive need to defy the stereotypes, we did not ask the two questions about the extent to which being intolerant and backward was characteristic of Christians, Catholics and atheists, and about the extent to which the English might sometimes think of them as being like this.

**Measures and materials.** The independent variables were: Meta-Stereotyped Group Identity (Catholic/Christian/atheist) and Meta-Stereotype (Intolerant/Backward). The dependent measures and the rest of the materials were the same as in *Study 1*. In the control intolerant stereotype condition the text was as follows:

In England the negative terms frequently associated with atheists are ‘intolerant,’ ‘prejudiced against faiths’ and ‘unhelpful to believers in God.’ This was also confirmed in our interviews. As one Englishman put it, ‘Maybe the reason for this is their spiritual isolation encouraging them to think of believers as inferior, but regardless of the reason they are intolerant.’ Another said ‘One can easily mistake their prejudice against religious beliefs for some kind of rationality that is manifest when they emphasize that logic alone is enough, but at the end of the day their attitude is prejudiced.’ Yet another Englishman respondent compared the atheist condescension towards religious beliefs to ‘an elaborate version of intolerance.’

In the control backward stereotype condition the text was as follows:

In England the negative terms frequently associated with atheists are ‘backward,’ ‘regressive,’ ‘hidebound,’ and ‘fuddy-duddy.’ This was also confirmed in our interviews. As one Englishman put it, ‘Maybe the reason for this is their spiritual isolation encouraging them to make little progress, but regardless of the reason, they are fuddy-duddy.’ Another one said, ‘One can easily mistake their hideboundness for some kind of rationality that is manifest when they accept only logic, but at the end of the day their attitude is regressive.’ Yet another Englishman respondent compared the atheism to ‘an elaborate version of backwardness.’

## **Results of Study 2**

Running an ANOVA, we found that the Catholic stereotype of intolerance ( $M = 5.60$ ,  $SD = .27$ ) was slightly more embarrassing than the Catholic stereotype of

backwardness ( $M = 5.50$ ,  $SD = .27$ ), but this difference was not statistically significant,  $F(1, 89) = .03$ ,  $p = .85$ .

**Monetary donation.** A strong main effect was found for Meta-Stereotyped Group Identity:  $F(1, 97) = 6.44$ ,  $p = .002$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .124$ . The pairwise comparison between participants exposed to Catholic ( $M = 30.81$ ,  $SD = 3.44$ ) and Christian stereotypes ( $M = 18.14$ ,  $SD = 3.78$ ) was statistically significant ( $p = .015$ ) and so was the comparison between participants exposed to atheist ( $M = 13.32$ ,  $SD = 3.70$ ) and Catholic stereotypes ( $p = .001$ ). However, the difference between participants exposed to Christian and atheist stereotypes was insignificant ( $p = .35$ ). No main effect was found for Meta-Stereotype:  $F(1, 97) = 1.06$ ,  $p = .304$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .012$  and the interaction of the two variables was not significant either:  $F(1, 97) = .16$ ,  $p = .81$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .003$ .

**Time donation.** A strong main effect was found for Meta-Stereotyped Group Identity:  $F(1, 97) = 4.48$ ,  $p = .014$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .090$ . The pairwise comparison between participants exposed to Catholic ( $M = 144.98$ ,  $SD = 12.34$ ) and Christian ( $M = 109.28$ ,  $SD = 13.58$ ) stereotypes was statistically significant ( $p = .055$ ), and so was the comparison between participants exposed to atheist ( $M = 92.00$ ,  $SD = 13.21$ ), and Catholic stereotypes ( $p = .003$ ). However, the difference between participants exposed to Christian and atheist stereotypes was insignificant ( $p = .33$ ). No main effect was found for Meta-Stereotype,  $F(1, 97) = .75$ ,  $p = .370$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .006$  and the interaction of the two variables was not significant either,  $F(1, 97) = .55$ ,  $p = .53$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .010$ .

**Organized religious support.** No main effects were found for Meta-Stereotype,  $F(1, 97) = .04$ ,  $p = .828$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .001$  or Meta-Stereotyped Group Identity,  $F(1, 97) = .15$ ,  $p = .85$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .003$ . The interaction of the two variables was not significant either,  $F(1, 97) = .64$ ,  $p = .52$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .014$ .

## Discussion

Similarly to *Study 1*, *Study 2* showed that outgroup helping could be motivated by the rebuttal of negative religious stereotypes if the available forms of help were pertinent to questioning the negative religious stereotypes. It also appeared that despite the threat indirectness, participants exposed to the meta-stereotyped Catholic identity offered more money and time to the religiously ambiguous outgroup than participants exposed to meta-stereotyped Christian and atheist identities (*Hypothesis 2*).

This suggests that the two stereotypes were probably perceived quite similarly, but were likely seen as more applicable to Catholicism than to Christianity. This interpretation appears to be plausible when one considers the current Vatican dogma on issues like priestly celibacy or the (now almost) universal ban on condoms, which is in contrast to more liberal Christian denominations. Such extremely orthodox ideas, which might be associated with backwardness, seem to be more deeply rooted in Catholicism than in Christianity in general (Hetnal, 1999).

As predicted, this time the offers of organized religious support were not significant. Unlike in *Study 1*, where turning to the local bishop could put the idolatry-operating Catholic Church in favorable light, in the context of intolerance and backwardness, just like in the context of intolerance in *Study 1*, the organized religious support was probably seen as potentially associating participants with the historically unprogressive institution of the Catholic Church. This lends a partial support to *Hypothesis 3*. Whereas in *Study 1* turning to the local bishop could not really defy the Catholic image of iconolatry, it could nonetheless redefine the highly ritualistic practice as a virtue that might facilitate organized religious help. In *Study 2*, turning to the bishop could not allow for similar redefinition of intolerance and backwardness as they

are not normally associated with virtue and their meanings are almost always pejorative. Hence, in this context turning to the bishop might be associated with ways of helping that are likely to be seen as outdated and potentially reaffirming, rather than refuting, the negative stereotypes.

### **General Discussion**

Given the paucity of empirical studies of Catholic and Christian meta-stereotyping, the predictions and interpretations could only be based on theological assumptions that we checked in the *Pilot Study*. Consistent with national identity meta-stereotype literature (Hopkins et al., 2007) we found that outgroup helping motivated by the refutation of religious meta-stereotypes (*Hypothesis 1*) and that this happened even under conditions of minimal identity threat (*Hypothesis 2*). We also have found that that such refutation occurred when the available channel of helping was meaningfully relevant to the given religious identity or if using that channel could put that identity in positive light (partial support to *Hypothesis 3*). Thus, we demonstrate that outgroup helping appears be motivated by a mere attempt to create, not just reaffirm (van Leeuwen, 2007), a positive ingroup image.

Whereas van Leeuwen (2007) showed that a threatened group identity promoted outgroup helping on positive identity-related domains, we showed that this can also happen on domains that may not always be interpreted favorably. Creating a positive image of that more or less threatened identity can be more important than the actual threat source – at least as long as the threat does not question specific elements of the ingroup image. Furthermore, although Hopkins et al. (2007) argued that for strategic helping to occur it was important that the source of the meta-stereotype (i.e., the English) can observe the stereotype-challenging behavior, our results suggested that this



does not have to be the case (since the English could not observe the helping behavior, and the people being helped were described as African).

When analyzing our findings tested among the Polish Catholics and Christians, a few words of caution are due. We are not in a position to make grand claims that would be relevant to other religious identities, which would require separate exploration. So how can our findings be of any relevance to anyone uninterested in the Polish versions of Catholicism and Christianity? It is not only the theoretical implications of intergroup processes that deserve attention. Based on our findings, it appears that strategic use of religious meta-stereotyping holds the potential of bringing some tangible benefits. Bearing in mind the issues of discrimination, intolerance and political correctness, perhaps in some circumstances considerate, moderate and controlled religious stereotyping might be a tool for rallying real help once complex ethical issues have been addressed.

Admittedly, the link between the willingness to help and actual helping is not always straightforward (Sutton, 2006). It is complicated by problems ranging from experimental manipulation and realistic settings to measurement of intervention and ethical issues. Nonetheless, Godin, Belanger-Gravel, Eccles and Grimshaw (2006) showed that the willingness to help others could assist in the prediction of helping behavior. We anticipated that presenting participants with a short vignette resembling a fragment from a daily morning paper describing a natural disaster scenario, would create a situation similar to the ways helping has been traditionally explored, thus facilitating our dialogue with the existing literature.

We also note that the desperate victims in our two studies were presented as African and so their social standing could also have played a role in participants'

display of generosity. Thus, we must acknowledge a possibility that not only may have participants wanted to create the image of Catholic or Christian benevolence, but they could have sought to reaffirm their economic and cultural power as well. The victims' African status and the fact that they were presented as experiencing a natural disaster common in Africa should also be taken into account. The religious, territorial and racial power relations could have interacted, which invites clarification in future research on outgroup helping that may also take into account judgments of responsibility (Marjanovic, Greenglass, Struthers & Faye, 2009). In line with the research on crossed-categorization (Crisp, Hewstone & Rubin, 2001), however, we argue that in real life these factors are often intertwined, indefinite and inseparable from the social context. As reality is complicated, so are identities that in real life are interlinked in many intricate ways. Striving to create sensitive research designs aimed at capturing at least some of such complexity can address some of this problem and help us take a few steps forward.

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## Appendix A

Religious Tolerance Scale (in the Christian condition the references to Catholics and non-Catholics were replaced by corresponding references to Christians and non-Christians)

Catholics are typically kind to non-Catholics

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 strongly agree

Catholics are usually helpful to non-Catholics

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 strongly agree

Catholics are normally sympathetic to non-Catholics

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 strongly agree

Catholics are typically understanding to non-Catholics

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 strongly agree

Catholics are usually generous to non-Catholics

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 strongly agree



Appendix B

Religious Formality Scale (in the Christian condition the references to Catholics and non-Catholics were replaced by corresponding references to Christians and non-Christians)

Catholics typically lay more store by religious images than non-Catholics

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 strongly agree

Holy Sites are usually more important to Catholics than to non-Catholics

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 strongly agree

Religious figures are normally greater authority for Catholics than for non-Catholics

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 strongly agree

Observance of formal rituals is usually more important to Catholics than to non-Catholics

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 strongly agree

Catholics are typically more organized than non-Catholics

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 strongly agree

## Appendix C

Ingroup Identification Scale (in the Christian condition the references to Catholicism were replaced by corresponding references to Christianity)

I identify with being Catholic

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 strongly agree

I think that Catholics work together well

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 strongly agree

I am glad to share a lot with Catholic culture

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 strongly agree

I consider Catholics to be important

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 strongly agree

I feel strong ties to Catholicism

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 strongly agree

## Appendix D

## Negative Valance Scale for Catholic 'Intolerance'

Catholics can be seen as intolerant

It does not embarrass me at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 It embarrasses me a lot

Catholics can be seem as prejudiced against other faiths

It does not embarrass me at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 It embarrasses me a lot

Catholics can be seen as unhelpful to non-Catholics

It does not embarrass me at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 It embarrasses me a lot

Catholics can be seen as unsympathetic to non-Catholics

It does not embarrass me at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 It embarrasses me a lot

Catholics can be seen as having little understanding for non-Catholics

It does not embarrass me at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 It embarrasses me a lot

## Appendix E

## Negative Valance Scale for Catholic 'Idolatry'

Catholics can be seen as idolatrous

It does not embarrass me at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 It embarrasses me a lot

Catholics can be seem as picture-worshipping

It does not embarrass me at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 It embarrasses me a lot

Catholics can be seen as fetish-minded

It does not embarrass me at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 It embarrasses me a lot

Catholics can be seen as overly-ritualistic

It does not embarrass me at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 It embarrasses me a lot

Catholics can be seen as laying too much store by ceremony

It does not embarrass me at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 It embarrasses me a lot

## Appendix F

## Negative Valance Scale for Catholic 'Backwardness'

Catholics can be seen as backward

It does not embarrass me at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 It embarrasses me a lot

Catholics can be seen as hostile to science

It does not embarrass me at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 It embarrasses me a lot

Catholics can be seem as regressive

It does not embarrass me at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 It embarrasses me a lot

Catholics can be seen as not being up to date with the modern world

It does not embarrass me at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 It embarrasses me a lot

Catholics can be seen as being stuck in the past

It does not embarrass me at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 It embarrasses me a lot



